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COMSOCEUR VAIHINGEN GE FOR PAO/POLAD  
COMSIXTHFLT FOR 019

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E.O. 12958: N/A  
TAGS: [IS](#) [KMDR](#) [MEDIA](#) [REACTION](#) [REPORT](#)  
SUBJECT: ISRAEL MEDIA REACTION

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SUBJECTS COVERED IN THIS REPORT:  
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- [1](#). Mideast
- [2](#). Iraq

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Key stories in the media:  
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Maariv and Ha'aretz led with developments on the political scene. The media reported that Likud Party Chairman Binyamin Netanyahu's proposal to have the party's central committee hold primaries to select its Knesset slate was successful. Ha'aretz reported that senior Kadima officials expressed concern last night over the party's continued slide in public opinion polls, as Ha'aretz said that the party was hurt by the publication of Acting PM Ehud Olmert's real estate deals (see results of Ha'aretz poll below).

The media reported that an Israeli from Netanya was shot and wounded near Qalgilya, further to the murder of a settler from Migdalim next to the settlement. Israel Radio reported that this morning an Israeli man was stabbed and wounded in the Atarot industrial zone in northern Jerusalem. The Jerusalem Post's web site quoted Olmert as saying this morning that Israel would use an "iron fist" against terror, and wouldn't place any restrictions on security forces in their fight against terrorism.

Yediot reported that the GOI's anti-terror HQ has intensified its travel warnings for Israelis, telling them not to visit any Arab country, particularly Egypt and Jordan, following alerts about reported intentions of terrorist organizations associated with global jihad to carry out attacks against Israeli targets. Israel Radio quoted PA Chairman [President] Mahmoud Abbas as saying that he has evidence that Al Qaida operates in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip.

Ha'aretz quoted Abbas as saying Wednesday that he intends to transfer broad security powers to the future Hamas government, including the national defense branch, preventive security, the civilian police, and civil defense. Israel Radio quoted a senior PA source associated with Abbas that the US is pressuring Abbas to restore full powers to the PA's National Security Council as the supreme body concentrating all the PA's security branches. The source was quoted as saying that the US hopes that thus Hamas will not have a grip on the PA's security forces. The radio further quoted the source as saying that should a Hamas-led government contravene the terms of the mandate it receives from Abbas, Fatah and Abbas would depose that government. Israel Radio quoted Khaled Mashal, the head of Hamas's political bureau, as saying in an interview with the Egyptian daily Al-Ahram that the Palestinians expect unilateral measures from Israel, because diplomatic initiatives presented to Israel have not brought forth the desired results.

Ha'aretz and Israel Radio reported that Labor Party Chairman Amir Peretz will meet with Abbas in Jericho today.

Israel Radio quoted Deputy State Department Spokesman J. Adam Ereli as saying Wednesday that Iran's statement that there is no need to seek a moratorium on uranium enrichment is a "move in the wrong direction."

The Jerusalem Post reported that the involvement of Dubai Ports World, the company chosen to manage six US seaports, in the Arab boycott against Israel has drawn sharp criticism in the US Congress and may hamper the attempts of the United Arab Emirates (UAE) to improve its trade ties with the US. Ha'aretz reported that the Anti-Defamation League urged the USG not to approve the contract with Dubai Ports World until the UAE announces it is putting an end to its boycott of Israel.

The Jerusalem Post reported that on Wednesday, Hamas vowed to punish PA officials in Fatah who are involved in land theft in the former settlements of the Gaza Strip.

All media reported on President Bush's surprise visit to Afghanistan on Wednesday.

Major media reported that on Wednesday, State Comptroller Micha Lindenstrauss cleared Olmert of any wrongdoing regarding the sale of his Jerusalem home.

All media quoted Defense Minister Shaul Mofaz and Internal Security Minister Gideon Ezra as saying on Wednesday before the parliamentary commission of inquiry into the events surrounding the evacuation of the Amona outpost that the IDF and police will not be the commission's "punching bag."

Ha'aretz reported that leading Democratic and Republican politicians, representing minority groups, will meet Friday in Washington to discuss a plan to enlist support for Israel's hard-line position toward Hamas from Hispanic and Black members of Congress. Ha'aretz reported that on Wednesday, the Jewish-American group Israel Policy Forum, urged members of the US Congress to thwart a draft resolution that provides for the interdiction of assistance to the PA and the definition of cooperation with the PA as a violation of the law.

Maariv reported that in an announcement referring to the "State of Israel," and not the "Zionist entity" as usual, Iran responded to attacks made by Israeli President Moshe Katsav in an interview with the Greek paper Kathimerini during his recent visit to Greece against the Iranian nuclear program. Iran cited the Israeli nuclear program in great detail.

Ha'aretz quoted National Infrastructure Minister Roni Bar-On as saying Wednesday in the Knesset plenum that Israel might agree to supply electricity and water to the Palestinians in exchange for natural gas from British Gas.

The Jerusalem Post and Israel Radio quoted Olmert as telling Kadima supporters in Rishon Letzion on Wednesday that Russian President Vladimir Putin is committed to Israel and that he would fall in line with the international stance against Hamas.

Ha'aretz and Hatzofe reported that Bar-Ilan University will award an honorary doctorate to former first lady, Senator Hillary Clinton. Professor Moshe Kaveh, President of Bar-Ilan University, will make the presentation in New York on Sunday.

Ha'aretz reported that Defense Minister DG Yaakov (Kobi) Toren told reporters on Wednesday that his ministry began reissuing export permits to China a few months ago. Toren was quoted as saying that the permits, which were issued in coordination with the US, allow Israeli companies to negotiate with Chinese companies over the sale of Israeli military products. Toren confirmed that the ministry wanted to create a department to coordinate security-related exports with the defense and trade and industry ministries. He was quoted as saying that the idea is for the department to be under the DG of the Defense Ministry, and emphasized that it would not supercede existing mechanisms for approving security exports, the main one of which is SIBAT, the Foreign Defense Assistance and Defense Export Organization. Toren denied any American pressure to create the new body.

Leading media reported that families of Israelis killed in Palestinian suicide bombings have collected 32,000 signatures on a petition to remove "Paradise Now" from the Academy Awards competition, saying the film glorifies terrorism. Ha'aretz cited an AP dispatch,

according to which the academy declined to comment on the petition. Yediot reported that Hany Abu-Assad, the Palestinian director of the movie, told the newspaper that Israelis are the terrorists, not the suicide bombers.

Yediot quoted police officials as saying that a senior police officer from Tel Aviv inflated the situation of crime in Israel in reports to U.S. officials, thus leading to this week's travel warning issued by the U.S. State Department.

Channel 10-TV and Ha'aretz published the results of a survey conducted by Prof. Camil Fuchs of the Amanet Group's Dialogue Institute:

- "Were elections for the Knesset held today, for whom would you vote?" (Results in Knesset seats -- in brackets, results of poll conducted on February 23.)  
- Kadima 37 (39); Labor Party 19 (19); Likud 15 (14); National Union-National Religious Party 11 (11); Shas 10 (9); Arab parties 9 (9); United Torah Judaism 6 (7); Yisrael Beiteinu 7 (7); Meretz 6 (5).

Maariv printed the results of a TNS/Teleseker Polling Institute survey conducted Wednesday evening -- before the Likud Central Committee meeting -- which shows an increase in support for the Likud:

- "Were elections for the Knesset held today, for whom would you vote?" (Results in Knesset seats.)  
- Kadima 39; Labor Party 21; Likud 18 (15 last week); National Union-National Religious Party 9; Shas 9; Yisrael Beiteinu 7; Arab parties 7 to 9; Meretz 5; United Torah Judaism 5.

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**1. Mideast:**  
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Summary:  
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Diplomatic correspondent Aluf Benn wrote in independent, left-leaning Ha'aretz: "All the [Israeli] governments, from all the parties, fought to slow down the [diplomatic] process, and all gave up more than they wanted and invested wasted billions in the settlements. That will also happen to Olmert if he doesn't dare to take the initiative."

Liberal op-ed writer Ofer Shelach commented in the lead editorial of mass-circulation, pluralist Yediot Aharonot: "It is obvious where the chaos and hardship in the PA and the increasing pressure employed by Israel are leading us. Hungry and desperate Palestinians have more of a tendency to terror."

Political scientist Dr. Menachem Klein, a senior member of the Geneva Initiative, who is presently on a sabbatical at MIT, wrote in Ha'aretz: "[Kadima and Hamas] are interested in ad-hoc unilateral arrangements.... Could such a coalition hold water? It appears that it wouldn't."

Nationalist writer Uri Dan commented in popular, pluralist Maariv: "The [Israeli] defense establishment must ... prevent future sliding into war."

Block Quotes:  
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**I. "Seize the Opportunity"**

Diplomatic correspondent Aluf Benn wrote in independent, left-leaning Ha'aretz (March 2): "This is Olmert's opportunity to shake off old ways. Instead of pleading with [Palestinian Prime Minister-designate] Ismail Haniyeh to accept Oslo, Hamas's victory can be exploited to impose the two-state solution. The Palestinians want freedom? Go ahead. Israel will announce that within a year it is giving up all responsibility for Gaza. No workers, no taxes, no electricity, no water. Let the Palestinians organize themselves to receive those services from Egypt, build a deep sea port and airport, and take the risk of a harsh reaction if the terror continues. In the West Bank, Israel will withdraw to the fence, and announce its readiness to negotiate any remaining border disputes. It sounds frightening, but in the north, Israel faced Syria and Hizbullah, which are a lot more heavily armed than the Palestinians and no less hostile, without controlling them through banks and food. And they are not shooting. For nearly two decades, since the first Intifada, Israel has been conducting rearguard action for control over the territories against a Palestinian uprising and terror as well as international pressure to withdraw. All the

governments, from all the parties, fought to slow down the process, and all gave up more than they wanted and invested wasted billions in the settlements. That will also happen to Olmert if he doesn't dare to take the initiative."

## II. "War Is On the Way"

Liberal op-ed writer Ofer Shelach commented in the lead editorial of mass-circulation, pluralist Yediot Aharonot (March 2): "Very quietly, after all, nobody wants to be the one to bring bad news -- particularly not on the eve of elections -- the numbers are beginning to indicate the return of violence.... It is obvious to all that Hamas, the only party in the territories capable of waging such a campaign, is being quiet so far. That is in its interest, at least until it establishes its regime. And the Israeli government has no interest in cracking the illusion that 'we have found the solution to terror' and the so easily understandable yearning of its citizens, who hoped that quiet had come. But even if we ignore the data showing a clear rise in the number of incidents, even if we don't count the Palestinians killed -- and we never count them, after all: according to the security theory prevailing here there is no connection between what we do and the level of terror -- even if we don't do all that, it is obvious where the chaos and hardship in the PA and the increasing pressure employed by Israel are leading us. Hungry and desperate Palestinians have more of a tendency to terror.... In September 2000 all Israelis were convinced that Arafat had ordered the outbreak of the second Intifada, a narrative that not everyone in the security establishment agreed with, but which was marketed energetically by the government and its spokespeople. In the summer of 2006, there is no Arafat, and it is very unlikely that there is anybody who cares what exactly is happening here. Just like in the previous round, very little will be achieved and not many things will be of true importance -- except for the fact that people on both sides will die."

## III. "A Short-Term Coalition"

Political scientist Dr. Menachem Klein, a senior member of the Geneva Initiative, who is presently on a sabbatical at MIT, wrote in Ha'aretz (March 2): "Neither Hamas nor Kadima are prepared to make necessary territorial and ideological concessions to institutionalize the connection between them in a long-term contract. Both sides are interested in ad-hoc unilateral arrangements in which Israel would carry out a partial withdrawal, in exchange for a truce in the harsh fighting.... Could such a coalition hold water? It appears that it wouldn't, because it contains destructive elements, the might of which is bigger than that of the bodies including them. In order for the Kadima-Hamas alliance to hold, both sides have to run a mutual demonization campaign and to maintain a certain level of violence and hostility.... Will both sides be able to engage in brinkmanship for a long time? It appears that they won't, particularly if one brings into account Shaul Mofaz's political interests and brawny conception, and the interests and modus operandi of the violent organizations on both sides."

## IV. "And Terror Goes On"

Nationalist writer Uri Dan commented in popular, pluralist Maariv (March 2): "Israelis residing in the western Negev, or south of Ashkelon, are absolutely not interested in the debate whether terror is strategic or existential, because they live under the daily threat of terror.... The southern front is losing its balance, because Israel has no answer to the Qassam rocket terror. It might lead to the depths of war.... The [Israeli] defense establishment must therefore find an answer to Qassam rocket terror, not only in order to restore security to the communities around the Gaza Strip, but also in order to prevent future sliding into war."

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12. Iraq:  
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Summary:  
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Liberal columnist Larry Derfner wrote in the conservative, independent Jerusalem Post: "America and Britain launched a war in the name of democracy and freedom for the Iraqi people. They can't abandon it

now.... It would be too evil to contemplate."

Block Quotes:

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"Arabs Killing Arabs"

Liberal columnist Larry Derfner wrote in the conservative, independent Jerusalem Post (March 2):  
"Finally, the war in Iraq has come into focus.... This is a civil war that appears out of control, certainly beyond the control of the hopelessly undermanned American and British armies over there.... The civil war going on now in Iraq, however, is America's and Britain's responsibility to stop. America and Britain, backed enthusiastically by Israel, much of Diaspora Jewry and evangelical Christianity, decided to invade Iraq without any invitation. Regardless of George W. Bush's and Tony Blair's intentions, they initiated a war whose direct consequence was the current, open-ended murderousness between the Shi'ites and Sunnis. So America and Britain can't wash their hands of this, not if they want to go on being decent countries. They have to send however many troops and spend however much money it takes to contain the violence. I would also say that Israel and anybody who endorsed the war have a responsibility to give America and Britain at least moral support for this cause. As for those Jews and gentiles who cheered on the invasion and who will now be rooting for civil war, they're exempt from responsibility because they had no morality to begin with. America and Britain launched a war in the name of democracy and freedom for the Iraqi people. They can't abandon it now in the name of realpolitik, with an exit strategy that improves as the Iraqi civil war intensifies. It would be too evil to contemplate."

JONES